

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 L-01 EB-03 SS-14 PM-03 INR-05 /033 W

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R 061413Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9434

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 0889

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FOR DAVID LAZAR ARA/CEN FROM AMBASSADOR SANCHEZ

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BE, HO

SUBJECT: DIPLOMATIC NOTE FROM EMBASSY OF VENEZUELA TO DEPARTMENT

1. THE SUBJECT OF THE VENEZUELAN NOTE HAS BEEN DISCUSSED
IN DETAIL WITH MR. SERGEANT WHO HAS SUPPLIED THE FOLLOWING
INFORMATION AND ATTESTS TO ITS VERACITY.

2. ON JANUARY 21, MR. SERGEANT ATTENDED A PARTY AT WHICH THE
FIRST SECRETARY OF THE VENEZUELAN EMBASSY, HERNAN CALCUCIAN
ROJAS, WAS PRESENT. MR. SERGEANT WAS ALREADY ACQUAINTED
WITH CALCURIAN. DURING THE PARTY SEVERAL PEOPLE IN A
SMALL GROUP APART FROM THE MAIN GATHERING STARTED TO
JOKE WITH CALCURIAN BY SAYING THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD
INVADE VENEZUELA BECAUSE OF ITS OIL POLICIES. (CONTRARY
TO THE STATEMENT IN THE NOTE, THE VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR,
WHILE PRESENT AT THE FUNCTION, WAS NOT A PARTY TO THE
THE CONVERSATION AT ISSUE). MR. SERGEANT JOINED THE GROUP
AND ATTEMPTED TO RELIEVE CALCURIAN'S DISCOMFITURE, SINCE
HE CLEARLY WAS BECOMING ANNOYED AT THE JOKING, BY CHANGING
THE TONE AND SUBJECT OF THE DISCUSSION. TO THE BEST OF
HIS RECOLLECTION OF A CONVERSATION WHICH TOOK PLACE OVER
SIX WEEKS AGO, HIS ONLY COMMENTS ON OIL WERE GENERALIZED
STATEMENTS TO THE EFFECT THAT THE ENERGY CRISIS WAS A
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VERY DIFFICULT ONE FOR ALL CONCERNED AND WOULD NOT BE

EASILY RESOLVED. MR. SERGEANT CATEGORICALLY AND SPECIFICALLY DENIES THAT HE MADE THE STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM IN THE NOTE TO THE EFFECT THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS PREPARING TO USE FORCE AGAINST VENEZUELA, THAT TWO DIVISIONS OF PARATROOPERS WERE STANDING BY FOR ORDERS, AND THAT SUCH AN INVASION WOULD BE MORE EASILY ACCOMPLISHED THAN THE INVASION OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. MR. SERGEANT'S COMMENTS WERE DIRECTED INSTEAD AT CHANGING THE CONVERSATION FROM OIL QUESTION TO A DISCUSSION OF OTHER LESS CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS SUCH AS THE IMPENDING VISIT OF PRINCE PHILLIP TO HONDURAS AND THE AGRARIAN REFORM LAW. TO MR. SERGEANT'S KNOWLEDGE, NO ONE AT THE PARTY, INCLUDING CALCURIAN, APPEARED TO THINK AT THE TIME THAT ANYTHING UNUSUAL OR OFFENSIVE HAD BEEN SAID OR THAT HIS CONVERSATIONAL PLOYS HAD BEEN ANYTHING OTHER THAN AN ATTEMPT TO ALLEVIATE AN UNCOMFORTABLE SITUATION FOR THE VENEZUELAN OFFICIAL.

3. FYI. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT IN THIS MATTER, MR. SERGEANT HAS BEEN THE INNOCENT VICTIM OF AN ATTEMPT BY THE VENEZUELAN SECRETARY TO ATTRACT THE ATTENTION OF HIS SUPERIORS AND TO MAGNIFY HIS PERSONAL IMPORTANCE BY ALLEGING TO HAVE DISCOVERED "EVIDENCE" OF A U.S. PLOT AGAINST HIS COUNTRY. THE SECRETARY IS REGARDED LOCALLY AS A VAIN AND SUPERCILIOUS PERSON, HIGHLY IMPRESSED WITH HIMSELF. IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED TOO, THAT TEGUCIGALPA IS A PRETTY PROVINCIAL CAPITAL, WHERE MANY EMBASSIES HAVE LITTLE TO REPORT TO THEIR GOVERNMENTS AND WHERE A "FANTASY" OF THIS KIND COULD BE A GODSENT PROFESSIONALLY. MR. SERGEANT, IN CONTRAST, IS A SERIOUS AND CAPABLE OFFICER, IN WHOSE DISCRETION THE EMBASSY HAS EVERY CONFIDENCE. I AM PARTICULARLY CONCERNED THAT THIS PATENTLY FALSE STORY, APPARENTLY CONCOCTED TO SERVE THE PERSONAL ENDS OF OTHERS, NOT BE PERMITTED TO REFLECT ADVERYSLEY IN ANY WAY ON A VERY ABLE FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER. IN SPECULATING ON VENEZUELAN MOTIVES IN SENDING NOTE, IT IS NOTEWORTH THAT VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR HERE HAS NEVER MENTIONED INCIDENT TO ME DESPITE NUMEROUS OPPORTUNITIES. END FYI.

4. DESPITE CLEAR GROUNDS FOR CATEGORICAL DENIAL OF FACTS
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ALLEGED IN VENEZUELAN NOTE, EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT, IN ORDER TO AVOID POSSIBLE OFFENSE TO VENEZUELAN OFFICIALS INVOLVED AND THUS PRECIPITATING OF FURTHER CHARGES, REPLY BE LIMITED IN NATURE STATING APPARENT MISUNDERSTANDING OF CONVERSATION AND ITS INTENT HAS REGRETFULLY LED TO INTERPRETATION WHICH IS OBVIOUSLY CONTRARY TO STATED U.S. POLICY.
SANCHEZ

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, DIPLOMATIC NOTES, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, ALLEGATIONS, SOCIAL RECEPTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975TEGUCI00889
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750079-0011
From: TEGUCIGALPA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750374/aaaacpbm.tel
Line Count: 115
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 SEP 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <10 SEP 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DIPLOMATIC NOTE FROM EMBASSY OF VENEZUELA TO DEPARTMENT
TAGS: PFOR, BE, HO, US, (SERGEANT, WILLIAM C), (CALCUCIAN ROJAS, HERNAN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006